



**RESTRICTED** — Not to be released outside the General Accounting Office except on the basis of specific approval by the Office of Legislative Liaison, a record of which is kept by the Distribution Section, Publications Branch, OAS  
COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

B-114874

10-2-73

090113

B-114874

RELEASED 090113

OCT 2 1973

The Honorable Thaddeus J. Dulski  
Chairman, Committee on Post Office  
and Civil Service  
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Your March 19, 1973, letter requested that we assist the Subcommittee on Postal Facilities, Mail, and Labor Management and the Subcommittee on Postal Service in connection with the field hearings they would be having as part of your Committee's investigation of Postal Service activities. On May 4, 1973, we briefed staff members of the Subcommittee on Postal Service and a staff member of your Committee on our examination of the quality of mail service provided by the Miami, Florida, Post Office and gave them copies of enclosures I through XIX. The Subcommittee used this data during its hearings in Miami on the mail service provided by the Miami Post Office. This letter summarizes our briefing.

The theme of our briefing was that the Miami Post Office had not consistently met the Postal Service's mail delivery standards but had improved its performance since the end of 1972. Significant quantities of first-class mail did not meet the standards because of mail processing delays and wrong destination routings due to sorting errors. Other factors affecting mail service included a significant reduction in the mail processing labor force during a period of increasing mail volume, the failure to receive a letter sorting machine which had been scheduled for installation before the Christmas surge, and low employee morale.

906882

090113

### BACKGROUND

The Miami Post Office's average number of employees decreased from 4,510 during the period July 1971 to March 1972 to 4,237 during the period July 1972 to March 1973, a decrease of 6.1 percent. During these same periods, the Miami Post Office's mail volume increased by about 108 million pieces--an increase of about 10.6 percent. To process the increasing volume, employees worked 893,801 overtime hours, an increase of 402,032 hours, or 81.8 percent. This significant increase in overtime was cited by postal union officials as a factor contributing to low employee morale.

The Miami office's approved budget for postal fiscal year (PFY) 1973 was based on an anticipated 6.5-percent increase in workload--the total number of times individual pieces of mail are handled; however, through the first 9 months of PFY 1973, the actual increase was 13.5 percent, or about twice the anticipated amount.

The Miami office handles about 1.3 billion pieces of mail a year, or about 4 million pieces daily. Through the first 9 months of PFY 1973, productivity at the Miami office steadily increased from 752 to 842 total distributed pieces handled per mail processing hour, an increase of 11.9 percent.

According to Miami postal officials, the handling of an increasing mail volume with a decreasing number of employees was possible because:

1. Management and supervision improved.
2. An additional letter sorting machine was installed.
3. Attention to productivity increased because of changes requiring post offices to operate within a specific budget.

### DELIVERY STANDARDS

The Postal Service has established standards which provide for the delivery of 95 percent of first-class mail

in 1, 2, or 3 days depending on the destination or the distance the mail must travel. For example, 95 percent of intra-sectional center facility mail (origin and destination within the Miami Sectional Center Facility area) should be delivered in 1 day. Except during the Christmas period, the Miami office generally met this standard.

However, the standard of 1-day delivery of mail to sectional center areas outside the Miami area but within southern Florida generally was not met. For instance, from September 15, 1972, to April 13, 1973, mail going from Miami to these sectional center areas met the standard in only one of fifteen 2-week periods. Mail going the opposite direction met the standard during three of the fifteen 2-week periods.

Also the standards of 2- and 3-day delivery of 95 percent of the mail going to northern Florida and all other States (except for Alaska and Hawaii which are not included in the 2- and 3-day standards) were not being met. From March 3 through March 30, 1973, only 87 percent of the mail designated to be delivered in 2 days and only 88 percent of the mail to be delivered in 3 days were delivered within those times. Of the three States designated to receive 2-day delivery, none received 95 percent of their mail within 2 days and only one received at least 95 percent of its mail within 3 days. Of the 45 States and the District of Columbia designated to receive 3-day delivery, only 15 States received at least 95 percent of their mail within 3 days.

#### Delayed mail

Despite the productivity gains achieved by the Miami office, significant quantities of first-class mail did not meet the delivery standards due to transporting and processing delays. For example, during the 7 months ended April 1973, about 2.5 million pieces of first-class mail were delayed. Although a 1-day delay in delivery of mail may not be important to--or even noticed by--most mailers, it could cause considerable hardship in some cases, such as a retiree waiting for a pension check.

B-114874

Miami postal officials said much of the delayed mail was caused by the failure to receive an additional letter sorting machine scheduled for delivery before Christmas, excessive unscheduled absences from work, and minor transportation problems.

Excessive unscheduled absences were the most frequently mentioned reason for the delayed mail. For example, from January 1 through April 16, 1973, excessive absences occurred on 28 of the 31 days mail was delayed. Miami officials are attempting to correct this problem, principally through eliminating overtime.

#### Misdirected mail

The Miami office misdirected significant quantities of mail. An important document being sent from Miami to Boston, for example, if mistakenly routed to another State, usually results in a 5-day delay in delivery.

Mail sorted on letter sorting machines can be misdirected because of machine or operator errors. From July 1972 through March 1973, misdirected mail resulting from such errors totaled 7.6 million pieces--about 4.6 percent of the volume of machine sorted mail during that period.

The Postal Service has developed a device for checking letter sorting machines to determine built-in errors and to check the performances of machine operators to identify those with a high error rate that would indicate a need for additional training. Because the machines have a built-in error rate of at least 1 percent, it is questionable whether the Postal Service will succeed in reducing the error rate to that experienced in manual sorting--estimated by postal officials to be 1 percent or less.

#### REDUCTIONS IN SERVICE

The Miami office has made several reductions in service. For example, from July 1, 1971, to April 27, 1973, the Miami office cut the number of two-trip delivery routes from 118

B-114874

to 38, a 68-percent decrease, and reduced the number of collection hours by 21 percent and the number of collections after 5 p.m. by 36 percent.

EMPLOYEE MORALE

Officials of the National Association of Letter Carriers and the American Postal Workers Union cited several factors contributing to low employee morale, of which the three primary factors were:

1. Many employees were shifted from day to night work.
2. Overtime was required before the regular work tour.
3. Temporary employees were assigned to the preferred daytime tour while regulars worked at night.

Miami's postal labor leaders told us management's attitude toward them had improved, and both labor and management expressed optimism for better relations in the future.

- - - -

Miami postal officials generally agreed with our findings. We do not plan to distribute this letter further unless you agree or publicly announce its contents.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "James B. Adams". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "James" and last name "Adams" being more legible than the middle initial "B.". The signature is written in a slightly slanted, upward position.

Comptroller General  
of the United States

Enclosures - 19

ENCLOSURE I



**MAIL VOLUME AND MANPOWER VARIATIONS  
IN MIAMI POST OFFICE**

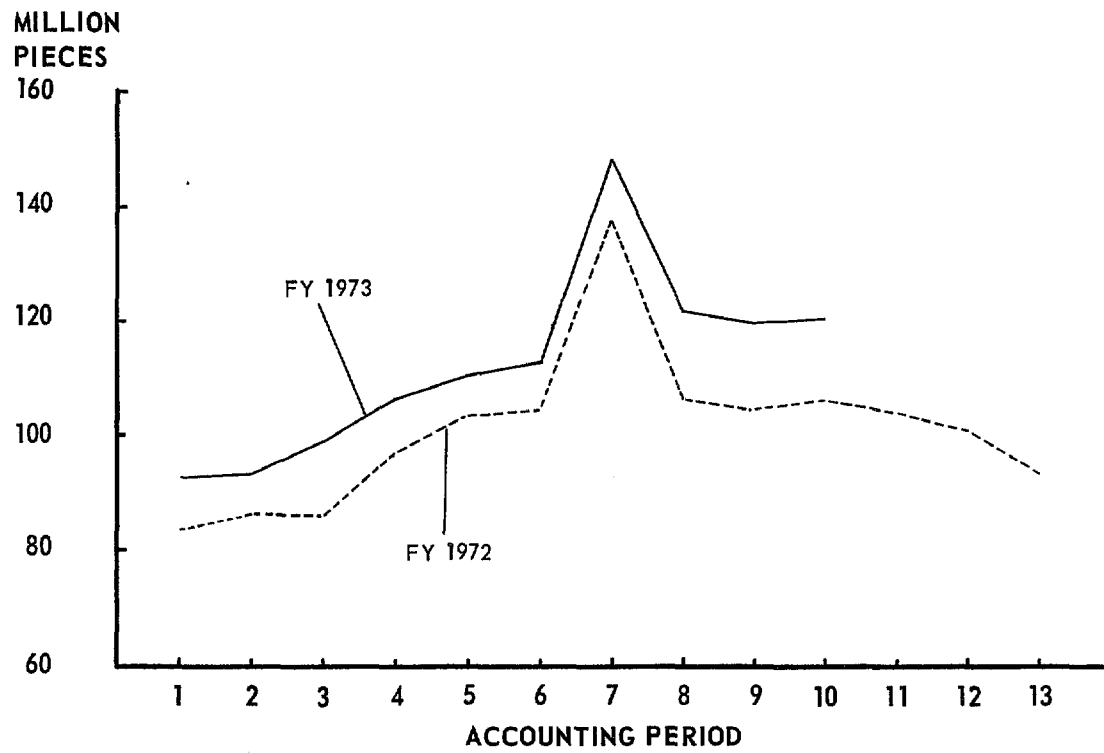


**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN**  
July 1971 – March 1972  
and  
July 1972 – March 1973



MAIL VOLUME	-----	10.6%
EMPLOYEES	-----	-6.1%
OVERTIME	-----	81.8%

## MAIL VOLUME - MIAMI POST OFFICE

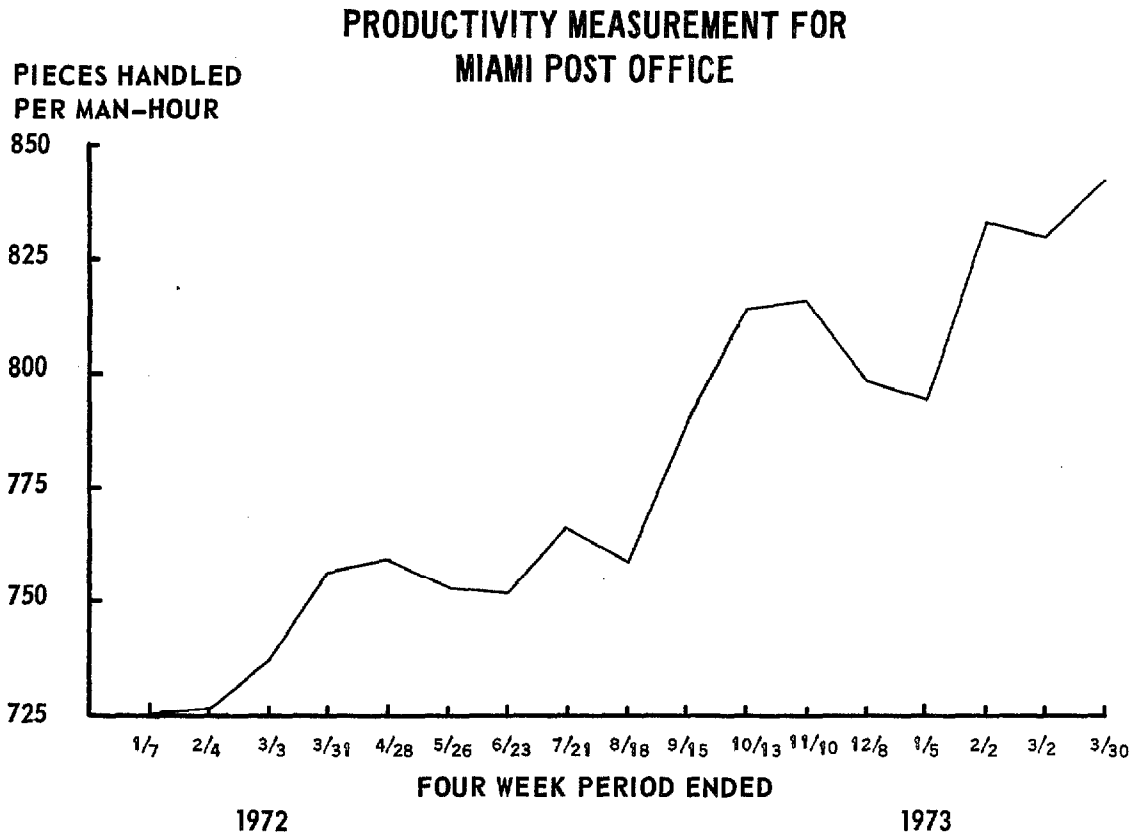




ANTICIPATED MAIL VOLUME INCREASE  
MIAMI POST OFFICE



INCREASE EXPECTED BY	
POST OFFICE AREA	7.9%
INCREASE BUDGETED BY	
REGION	6.5%
INCREASE ACTUALLY	
EXPERIENCED	13.5%



**DELAYED FIRST-CLASS MAIL**

October 1972 to April 1973

POST OFFICE

MILLION PIECES

MIAMI

2.5

**LSM ERRORS RESULTING IN MIS-SENT  
OUT-GOING FIRST-CLASS MAIL**

**July 1972 to March 1973**

**POST OFFICE**

**MILLION PIECES**

**MIAMI**

**7.59**

**MAIL PROCESSED ON LSM'S REQUIRING REHANDLING  
OUT-GOING FIRST-CLASS MAIL  
MIAMI POST OFFICE  
JULY 1972 TO MARCH 1973**

	<u>MILLION PIECES</u>
BYPASSED -----	4.92
ERRORS -----	<u>7.59</u>
TOTAL	12.51

SERVICE STANDARDS	
REORGANIZATION	
BEFORE	AFTER
NONE	<b>FIRST CLASS</b> <b>OVERNIGHT:</b> INTRA-SCF & ADJOINING SCF'S DESIGNATED LOCALLY <b>SECOND DAY:</b> 6 00 MILES <b>THIRD DAY:</b> NATIONWIDE
	<b>AIRMAIL</b> <b>OVERNIGHT:</b> 600 MILES PLUS DESIGNATED AREAS <b>SECOND DAY:</b> NATIONWIDE CONTIGUOUS STATES

**OVERNIGHT DELIVERY  
REQUIREMENTS**

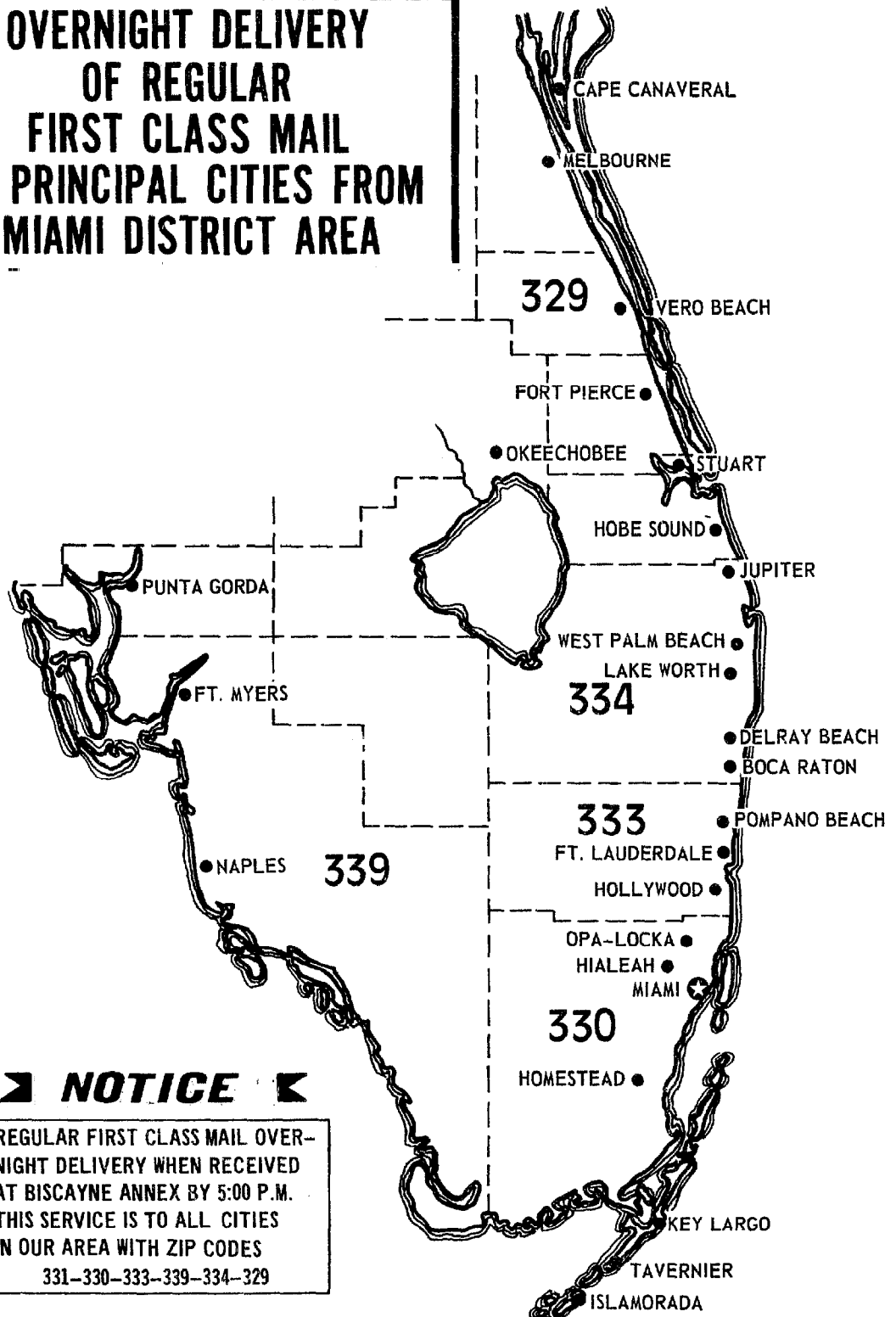
***FIRST CLASS***

MAILED BY 5:00 P.M. AT  
POST OFFICE OR COLLEC-  
TION BOXES MARKED  
WITH STAR

***AIRMAIL***

MAILED BY 4:00 P.M. AT  
POST OFFICE OR  
WHITE TOP COLLECTION  
BOXES

**OVERNIGHT DELIVERY  
OF REGULAR  
FIRST CLASS MAIL  
TO PRINCIPAL CITIES FROM  
MIAMI DISTRICT AREA**



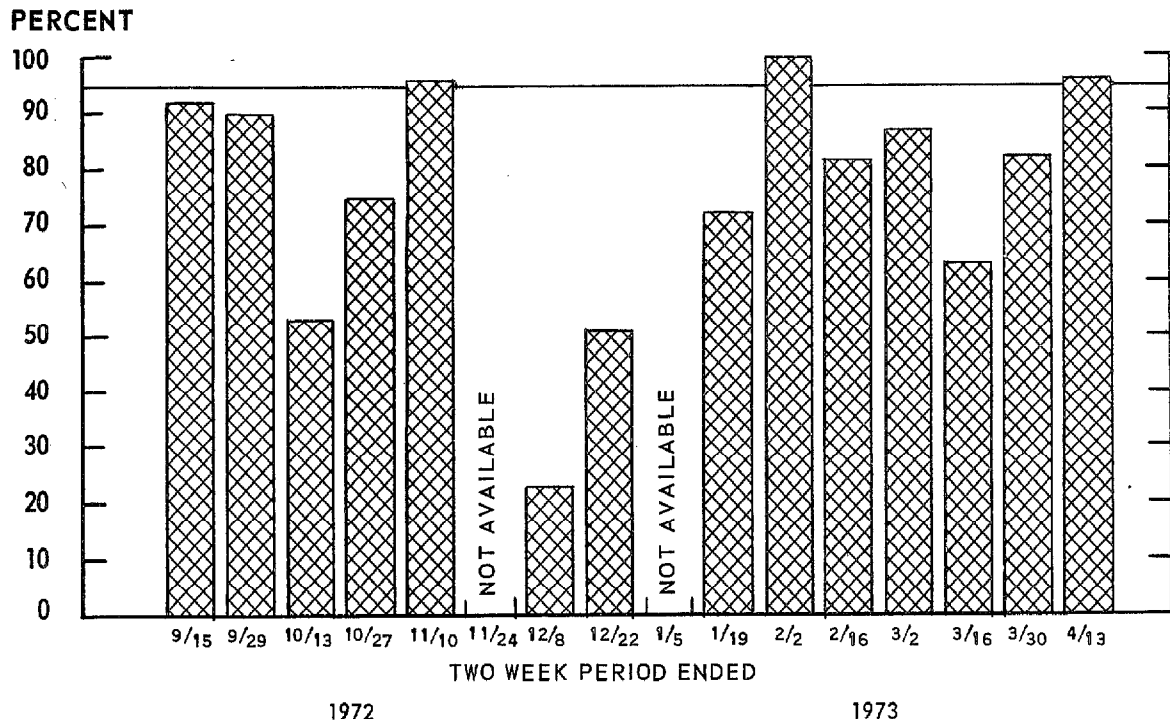
**NOTICE**

REGULAR FIRST CLASS MAIL OVER-  
NIGHT DELIVERY WHEN RECEIVED  
AT BISCAINE ANNEX BY 5:00 P.M.  
THIS SERVICE IS TO ALL CITIES  
IN OUR AREA WITH ZIP CODES  
331-330-333-339-334-329

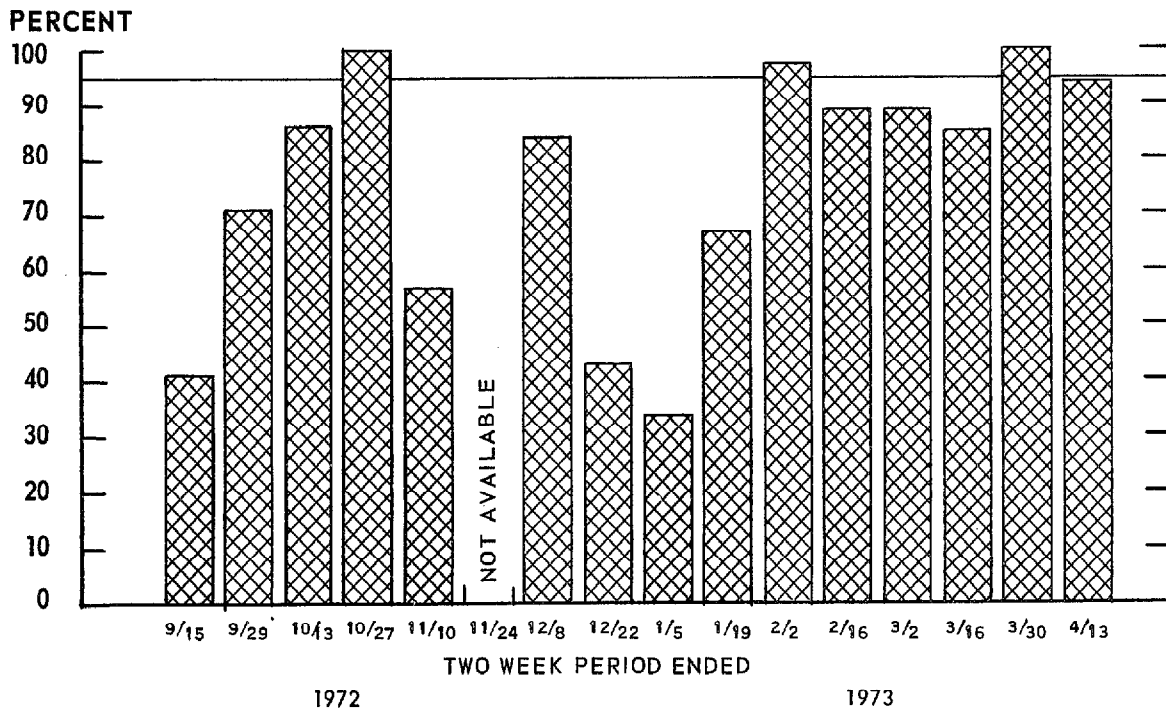


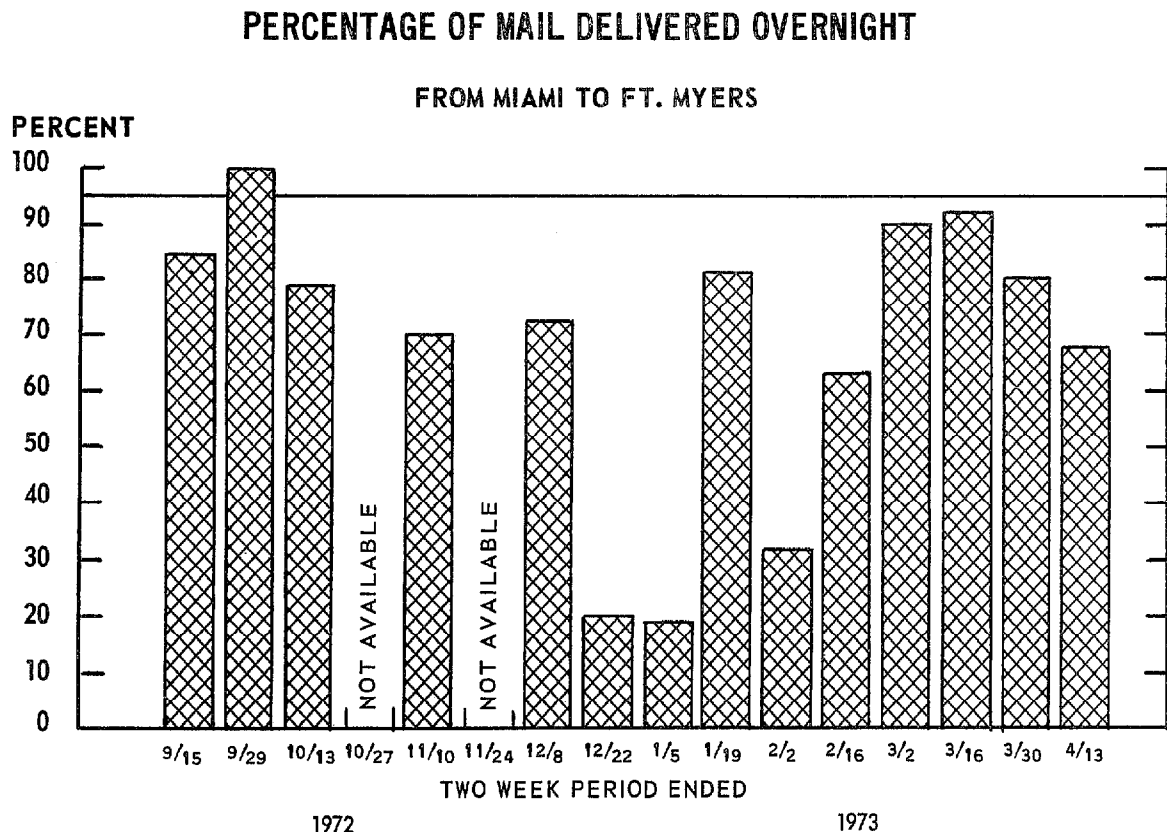
# PERCENTAGE OF MAIL DELIVERED OVERNIGHT

## FROM MIAMI TO WEST PALM BEACH



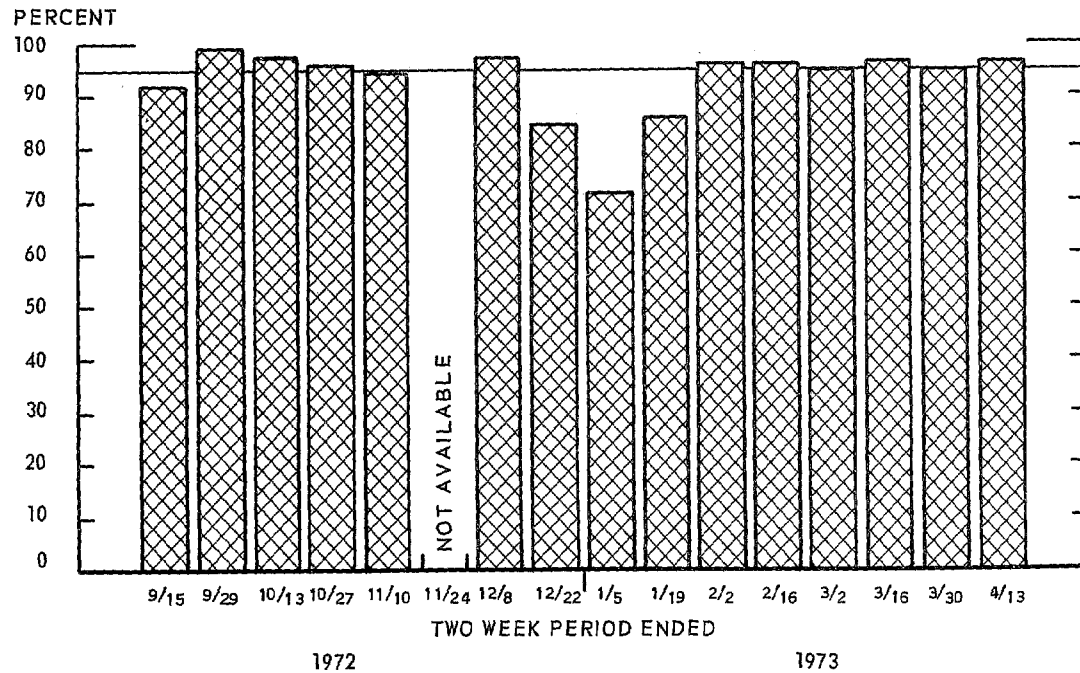
## FROM WEST PALM BEACH TO MIAMI



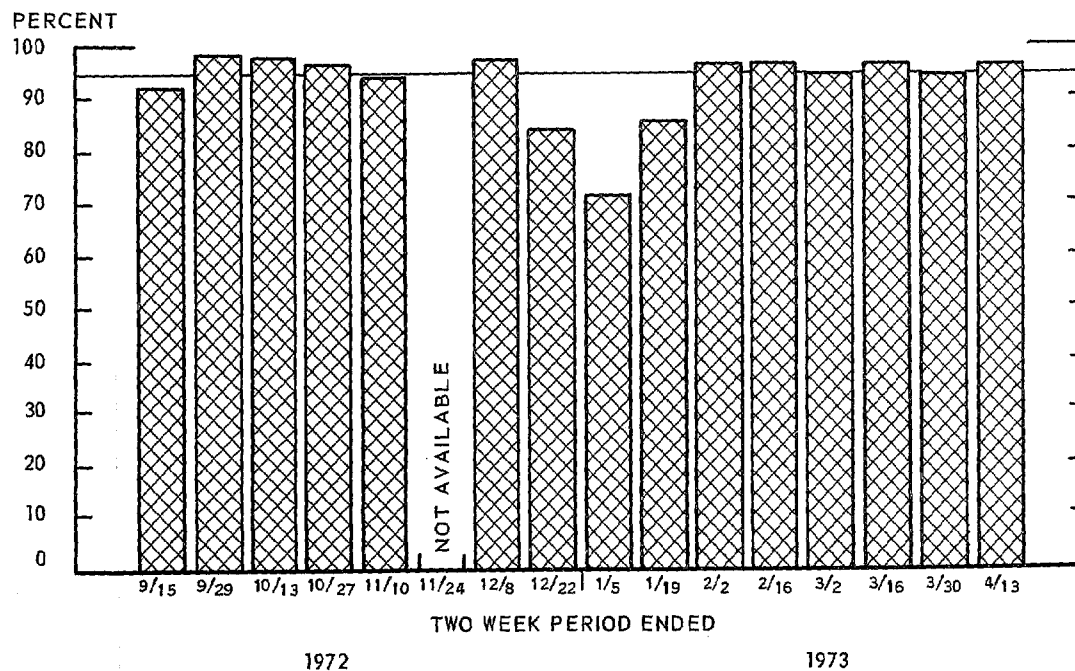


# PERCENTAGE OF MAIL DELIVERED OVERNIGHT

## FROM INTRA-SCF AREAS TO MIAMI

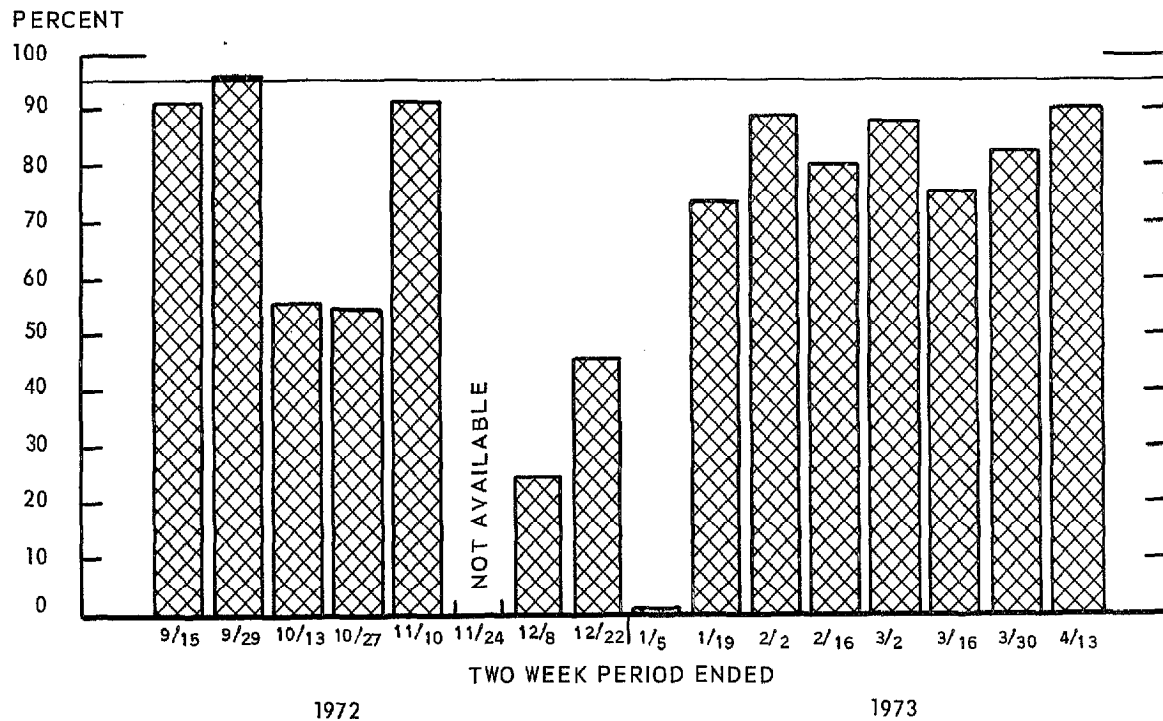


## FROM MIAMI TO INTRA-SCF AREAS

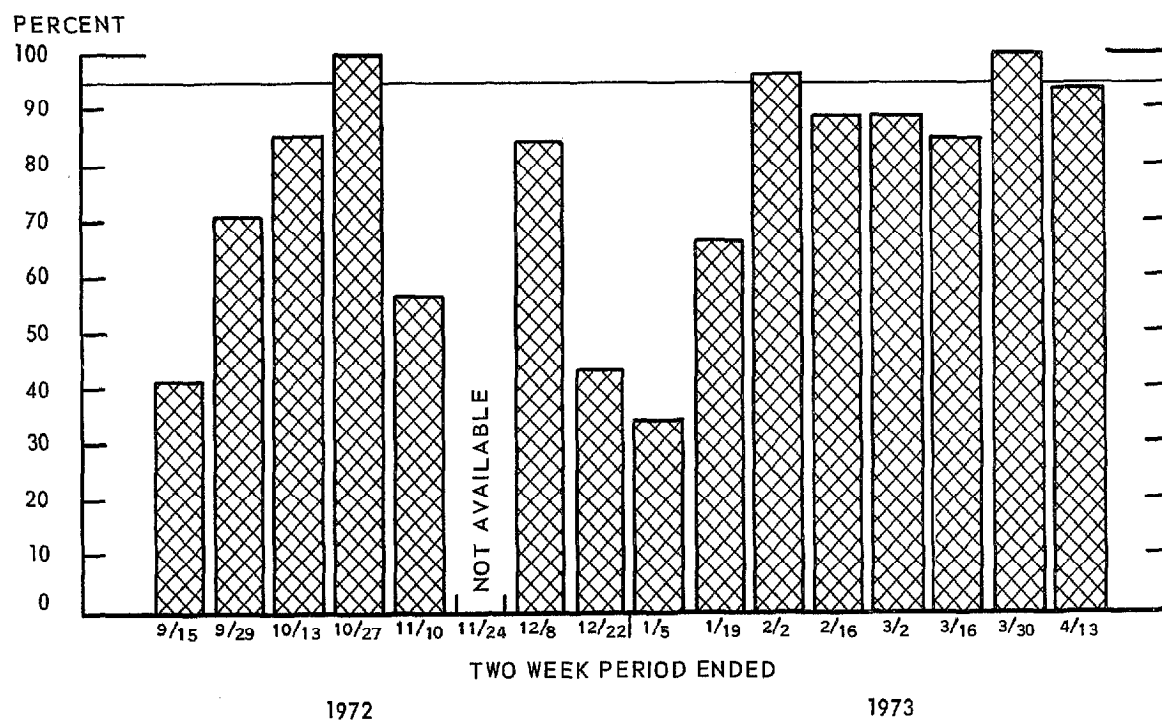


### PERCENTAGE OF MAIL DELIVERED OVERNIGHT

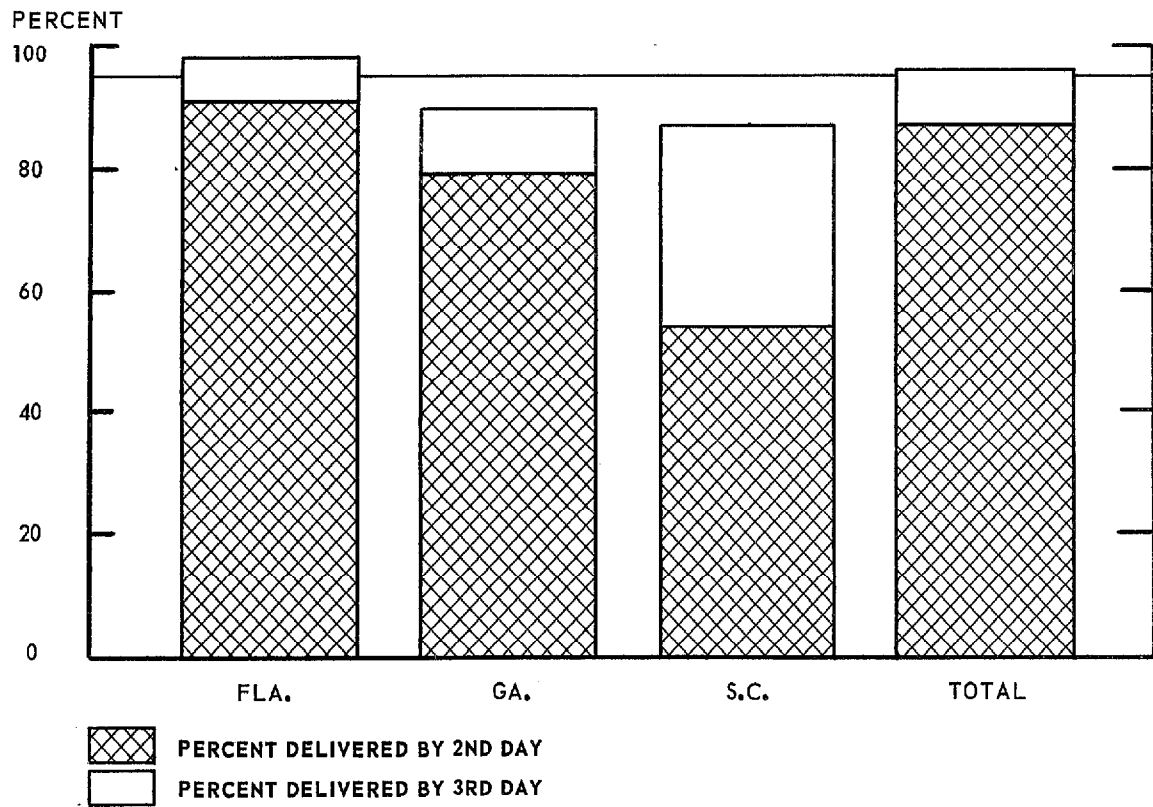
## FROM MIAMI TO INTER-SCF AREAS



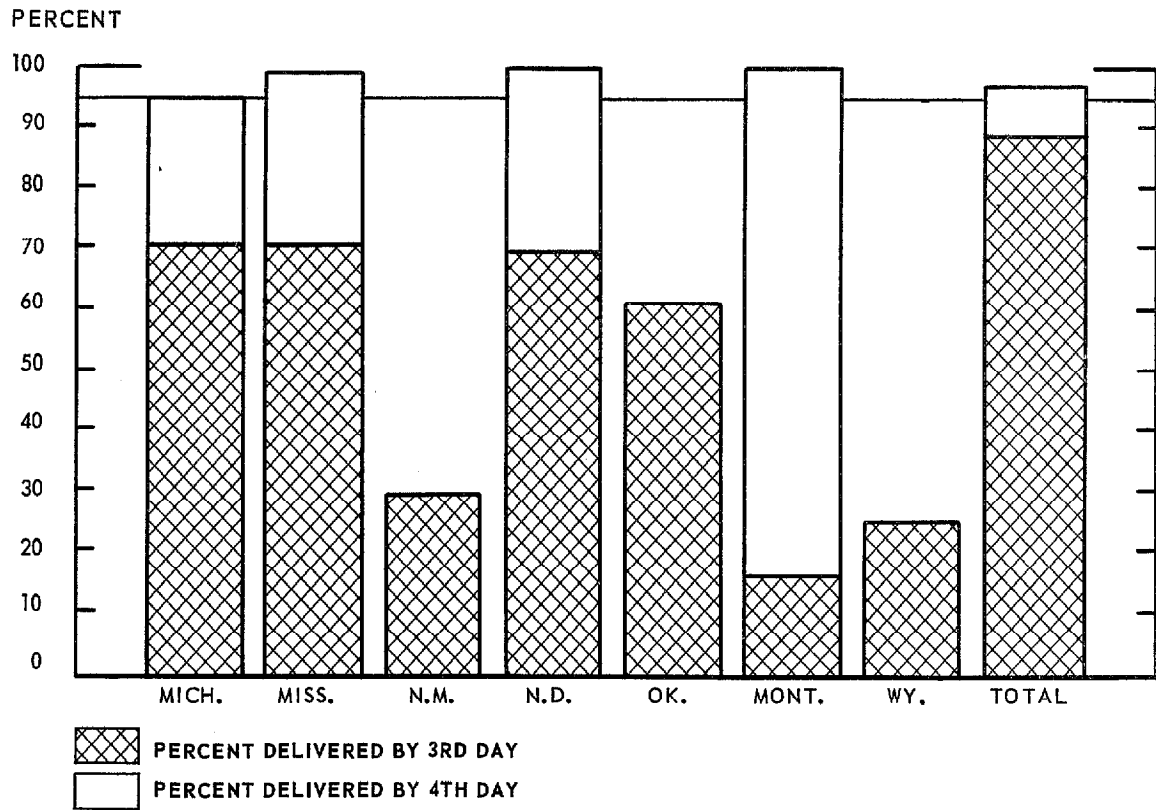
**FROM INTER-SCF AREAS TO MIAMI**



**PERCENT OF MAIL DELIVERED FROM MIAMI TO  
TWO DAY STANDARD DESTINATION STATES (3/3/73-3/30/73)**



**PERCENT OF MAIL DELIVERED FROM MIAMI TO  
THREE DAY STANDARD DESTINATION STATES (3/3/73 - 3/30/73)**



**REDUCTION IN SERVICES FOR  
MIAMI POST OFFICE**

	<u>NUMBER</u>		<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
	<u>JULY 1972</u>	<u>APRIL 1973</u>	<u>DECREASE</u>
<b>COLLECTION HOURS</b>	5812	4585	21.1
<b>COLLECTION BOXES</b>	1879	1719	8.5
<b>COLLECTION AFTER 5 P.M.</b>	1879	1197	36.3
<b>DELIVERIES - 2 TRIP</b>	118	38	67.8

**LOW EMPLOYEE MORALE RESULTING FROM:**

- MANDATORY OVERTIME
- SHIFTS IN TOURS
- TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES
- JOB EVALUATION PROGRAM
- LOSS OF JOB SECURITY AND RIGID DISCIPLINE
- BAD PUBLICITY